

The Honorable Mayor Thomas M. Menino
State of the City Address
January 17, 2012

Prepared for Delivery

Senator Brown, Congressman Lynch, United States Attorney Ortiz, Governor Patrick, Treasurer Grossman, Auditor Bump, Secretary Galvin, Senate President Murray, Speaker DeLeo, Sheriff Cabral, District Attorney Conley, distinguished guests, and fellow residents. Thank you for joining me tonight.

In this era when we spend too much time staring at our phones, it is a pleasure to come together *in person*.

Please acknowledge our dedicated city councilors and the neighborhoods they represent.

Let us also recognize the men and women of the United States Military.

My own family is with us, and it is a special delight for me. Angela, I thank you for all you do for me and for this great city.

Tonight, I will speak foremost about people. It is a topic that would seem obvious – if not for its absence from so many conversations in government today. I want to talk about people because our efforts at building community – above all else – are the reason that Boston ranks above perhaps every city in America.

We need collaboration now more than ever, because as Boston continues moving forward, harmful divisions have sprung up around us.

There are political divisions across our country. We see evidence of this in some Washington politicians who have made threats of government shutdowns so routine they are no longer newsworthy. Politicians shouldn't pat themselves on the back for fixing self-made problems while the real challenges – like putting people back to work – go unaddressed.

There are also economic divisions. The Occupy Movement gave voice to inequality that threatens our economy. I don't begrudge anyone for being successful, but true progress should be shared widely.

So, why has Boston thrived – despite these divisions around us? We’ve refused to allow strained budgets to result in strained relationships. While others have been building walls, we have been building connections:

We brought together developers and community partners to break ground on 22 projects last year and put thousands of people back to work. And Boston's unemployment rate has dropped almost two full points in the last year.

To lower municipal health care costs, we did not move forward by ourselves. We drew on established *relationships* with Jen Springer from AFSCME and many other union leaders. Please join me in recognizing them. Together, we forged a groundbreaking agreement that will slow the growth of runaway healthcare costs by more than \$70 million.

To cut crime, Boston Police officers walked the beats in their neighborhoods and built trust with the people they serve. We understand the best piece of data is the latest conversation with a shop owner or youth activist. Above anything else, it was our *personal approach* that allowed us last year to cut crime by eight percent and reduce homicides by sixteen percent.

To make sure all children in Boston – no matter where they go to school – receive a great education, we signed the District-Charter Compact. At the root of this new partnership are *trusted relationships*. They allow us to move past competition toward collaboration. And the Boston Public Schools are getting results. Our fourth and eighth graders’ scores in math last year beat out almost every large city across the country.

We continued to build an Innovation District on the waterfront so entrepreneurs can share ideas and resources. We could have just thrown up some skyscrapers and high end condos. Instead, we insisted on *building connections* – in addition to new space. So now more than 100 new companies have brought 3,000 jobs to the waterfront – and more are on the way.

To make Boston the capital of healthy food, we strengthened the *common places* people gather to buy and eat food: our farmers markets, community gardens, food trucks, and more. We believe food institutions do more than grow fresh fruits and veggies; they grow a sense of neighborhood togetherness.

All across the city, we made big investments in our neighborhoods. And our *relationships* are what made these projects successful. In Jamaica Plain, we invested \$6 million to renovate Curtis Hall. In East Boston, we celebrated a new Greenway. In Roslindale, we opened brand new public housing at Washington Beech. In Hyde Park, we improved the George Wright golf course. In Dudley Square, our investments in the Ferdinand are underway. And across our city we created record numbers of housing.

Our relationships are strong. Therefore, the state of our city is strong.

Now, we must use the trust we have in each other to get big things done in 2012. I believe that our strong relationships are the reason to tackle tough tasks and the key to succeeding at them.

We'll first have to rely on the trust we've built as we confront truths about one of our most important city assets – Madison Park Technical Vocational High School.

Madison Park should be the pathway to solid jobs and a strong future for city youth. Thanks to the facility, the finances, the teachers, and leadership, Madison Park can be their launching pad. However, only eleven students last school year were involved in a work based cooperative, the gold standard of vocational education, and the average student is absent for more than one month every year. We must do a better job engaging our students.

Tonight, I am announcing a plan to transform Madison Park into a top notch center for career readiness and workforce development. First, we will work to designate Madison Park as an "Innovation School." We can then change the schedule and the curriculum so they allow for real work-based experiences. Second, we will create the Madison Park Business Partnership. I challenge Boston's businesses and institutions to provide advice, jobs, and their own financial resources to help transform this school.

I am delighted to announce our first two partners: Renowned Chefs Barbara Lynch, who herself attended Madison Park, and Gordon Hamersley. They will provide instruction and guidance to Madison Park's culinary program and open up their restaurants for internships and apprenticeships. With these kinds of collaborations, we'll succeed in creating a first-class vocational education in Boston and a first class ticket to success for our students.

We won't stop there. The partnerships, facilities, and training we develop together can also be deployed at night for our neighbors. So we will also turn Madison Park into a better center of job training for unemployed and underemployed Bostonians.

Real change won't come easily. We must build new connections to take the school to new heights. Then, Madison Park will be a shining example of how to increase jobs and opportunity in our neighborhoods.

In 2012, we will also take our public safety efforts to the next level. Over the last six years, we have reduced crime by 25 percent. But we must drive it lower yet.

We will expand our Neighborhood Crime Watch Groups, because they are at the heart of community policing. We will make it easier to join, to share information, and to connect. By the end of this year,

we will have 100 new active Neighborhood Crime Watches in the city. I've always believed the crime watches are the perfect kind of community meetings – no egos, no fancy titles – just a job to get done.

Of course, the best way to recruit community partners is with our own commitment to public safety. That is why I am happy 25 more recruits will join the force this year.

I am also asking the Boston Police to expand their Unresolved Shootings Project. Every shooting shatters peace in a neighborhood, whether it results in a murder or not. So I want to make sure all shooters are brought to justice and that their guns are taken off the street.

As we look to each other to move the city forward, we also have to take an honest look at our health. Boston was named America's third healthiest city last year in *Forbes*. Our neighborhoods are filled with walkers, runners, and bikers – even in the cold of winter – and our hospitals and health centers provide unmatched care close to home.

Yet for all the strides we've made in public health, obesity is a problem that remains. Fifty percent of adults here are overweight or obese. And one in three Boston school-aged children are, too.

I'm determined to make Boston a leader in obesity prevention. We will implement a citywide strategy to connect all of the good work going on and reach out to all children and all families. We will offer funds for childcare providers for obesity prevention and we will expand the use of our successful Bounty Bucks program.

Look, weight is an issue that many of us struggle with. But what is daunting on our own becomes doable when we work together. So, my goal is to see all of us combine to shed a million pounds this year.

We also need to stick together when it comes to job creation. Too many of our neighbors remain unemployed. Together, we will move forward on our investments in the neighborhoods and on the waterfronts, and we will support big and small businesses alike.

This year, another important job-creation project will take shape in the form of a resort casino proposal in East Boston. Boston must do this in a way that improves our city and enhances our reputation. Therefore, even before the State Gaming Commission is put together, I will create a Boston Gaming Advisory Board with leaders from outside city government. It will have a two-part mandate: Maximize job creation for Bostonians and provide transparency for residents into the process of casino review.

In East Boston, and across our city - from Bowdoin Geneva to Brighton, we'll put more people back to work.

I want to finish with the topic that will give us the greatest opportunity to use our strong bonds and deep trust.

The Boston Public Schools have come a long way in the last twenty years. When I became mayor, many parents considered sending their children to only a handful of schools. Today, more than 100 of our schools have waiting lists because they are so popular with parents. Our graduation rate has never been higher, and our dropout rate hasn't been lower in two decades.

But something stands in the way of taking our system to the next level: a student assignment process that ships our kids to schools across our city. Pick any street. A dozen children probably attend a dozen different schools. Parents might not know each other; children might not play together. They can't carpool, or study for the same tests. We won't have the *schools* our kids deserve until we build *school communities* that serve them well.

I'm committing tonight that one year from now Boston will have adopted a radically different student assignment plan – one that puts a priority on children attending schools closer to their homes. I am directing Superintendent Johnson to appoint a citywide group of dedicated individuals. They will help design the plan to get us there and engage the community on this transition.

I know I have talked about changing the student assignment plan before. We have made many improvements over the years. 2012 will be the year to finish the job.



It has now been said many times that I have met more than half of the people who live in Boston. Not everyone will have the chance to meet so many of our neighbors. But ask yourself, have you met more than half of the people on your street? More than half of the folks in your church? Half of the parents of your child's classmates? I urge you to try. *In order to reach great heights, we all have to reach great lengths. In order to reach up in 2012, we all need to reach out.*

In our personal lives, our relationships carry us through the biggest challenges. It is the same way in our civic lives. This year, we will face many tests. We must never allow disagreements to drive us apart. The more we know each other, the more we will trust each other, and the more we will be able to accomplish. Together, we will make 2012 another landmark year in Boston's storied history.

May God continue to bless our great city.